

Noble Dec 19th 1859

Dear Sister.

I hearing that there will
be a gathering of the Coms. on Christmas-
day or rather the day following — And being as
this branch of the Tree will not cast
shade over the social board, I will
delegate this little sheet to be my proxy.
if not seen, I will at least have the
satisfaction of being heard. Received
Ann's letter this morning. though short
I am extremely happy to say that
I understood all of it. — stop — no not
either. The two mystic letters enclosed
in brackets. (D & V) nonplussed me.
But as she was speaking of the meeting (which
I share the honor of attending — few letters —)
and regretted my absence, she must have
tended it for an abbreviated ("Don't you
wish you was here" — That I do —

So don't
wonder for the
absence of the
letter to Ann
and all the
other letters
which I have
sent you.

Presuming that by this time, the comi
is brought on - Allow me to propose
a toast, (Company all standing) Here's
at you Kith and Kin: one and all -
(Kith and Kin all bow). A merry and a
happy Christmas, followed by a succession
of others equally as merry and happy, and
"here's hoping," that on some future assemblage
I may be with you in person, not only &
but also. (Master Frank's expectations) for
particulars I refer you to Mrs. Don't get
fatigued. I have a few more remarks to
make. - ahem - As the two Miss
Hearts. (Here Misses C. B. & A. C. looks sweetly)
are getting on to rather a dubious age.
(here their sweet looks are slightly tinged
with acid) I would advise them to take
advantage of the coming leap year, and
procure them each a lord and master. -
Here the said Misses, subside into the meanest
cham. acid predominating. You can skin

off the cream of that joke to put on your
plum pud— Don't applaud & implore
you. To Caesar's Betty. (here Betty arrives
with her accustomed dignity) Here's hoping
that you will not be disturbed by young Gasts
at unreasonable hours, thereby causing you
to ~~disturb~~ delight said young Gasts, by a
white apparition at the window. "Here's
hoping" that you will be more punctual in
answering my letters— Here Miss Betty
attempts to curtsy disdainfully, but unfor-
tunately, one of her no 6 shoes, is caught in her
moderate size hoop— and she and her
curtsy subside into a chair. While
Hannah (African) ~~stays~~ under the
table, to extract the unuly member,
I've finished my toast— to the bottom
no heel taps—

If you were in Mobile to day you
would not fall in love with the place,
outside, "the wind and rain beats cold December,"

And the mud, speaking within bounds—
is a foot deep. and speaking of
mud. we will—that is Joe Eskridge
and myself—have somewhat the like
of six dozen Eggs in our room on Christmas
and if we don't celebrate the day in the
good old-fashioned style. it will be no
fault of ours. Dick is expected to contribute
to the light of his Countenance on that occa-
sion. Ask Cousin Margaret how her
Cranberries hold out. Tell Betty if
she don't send me her likeness immediately—
why there will be an awful destruction
of whalebone, starch, hairpins, tuck Combs,
dry goods, and other articles too numerous
to mention, appertaining to the "get up" of a
young lady—when I come home—
'Twas the night before Christmas, when
all through the house, &c. Happy New
Year—

Your affect Bro John K. Hoyt.

John Keais Hoyt (1840-1910) was a member of The Mobile Rifles Militia, of Mobile, AL, subsequently Company K of the Third Alabama Regiment of Volunteers; the first regiment from the deep south to be deployed to Virginia, in May 1861. He was tall, slender, with a fair complexion and black hair; well-educated, well-bred young gentleman of North Carolina. He was working as a bookkeeper in Mobile; living likely in a boarding house off Bienville Square (as unattached young clerks did) when Alabama seceded.

He rose swiftly through the ranks of his Company; he went off to war as a Forth Sergeant; appointed First Sergeant in September, and elected Captain in May of 1862. His younger brother James Henry Hoyt was also a member of The Mobile Rifles. John Hoyt writes to his sister, Clara; older brother Edmund; and to his mother. He survived the war and returned to his native North Carolina.

Transcription contains minor changes to spelling and punctuation, for clarity. The first letter is a Christmas letter to family, and introduces us to a very clever writer, an affectionate and cheeky brother, and a witty correspondent. The second letter in the collection is a partial, but is evidently describing the taking of Mount Vernon Arsenal, near Montgomery, in early 1861:

Mobile, Dec 19th 1859

Dear Sister

Hearing that there will be a gathering of the Clans on Christmas, or rather the day following – And “being as how” this branch of the Tree will not cast a shade over the social board, I will delegate this little sheet to be my proxys, for if not seen, I will at least have the satisfaction of being heard. Received Annie’s letter this morning. Though short, yet I am extremely happy to say that I understood all of it – *stop* – no, not all either. The two mystic letters enclosed in brackets (D V)

nonplussed me. But as she was speaking of the meeting (which I have the honor of attending – per littera -) and regretted my absence, she must have intended it for an abbreviated (“Don’t you wish you were here” – That I do —

[Page 2] Presuming that by this time, the ---- is brought on, allow me to propose a toast, (Company all standing) *Here’s at you kith and kin: one and all* (Kith and Kin all bow). *A merry and a happy Christmas followed by a succession of others equally as merry and happy, and “here’s hoping” that on some future assemblage I may be with you in person, not only I but also (Master Frank’s expectations) for particulars I refer you to Ma. Don’t get fatigued, I have a few more remarks to make, — ahem — As the two Miss Hoyts* (Here Misses C.B. & A.C. look sweet) *are getting on to rather a dubious age, (here their sweet looks are slightly tinged with acid), I would advise them to take advantage of the coming leap year, and procure them each a lord and Master. (Here the said Misses subside into the nearest chair, acid predominating) You can skim [page 3] off the cream of that joke to put on your plum pud–, Don’t applaud I implore you. To cousin Betsy* (here Betsy arrises with her accustomed dignity) *Here’s hoping that you will not be disturbed by young Jesters [?] at unreasonable hours, thereby causing you to ~~disturb~~ delight said young Gents, by a white apparition at the window. “Here’s hoping” that you will be more punctual in answering my letters* (Here Miss Betsy attempts to curtsy disdainfully, but unfortunately, one of her No. 6 shoes, is caught in her moderate size hoop, and she and her curtsy subsides into a chair, while Hannah (African) dives under the table, to extract the unruly member) *I’ve finished my toast, to the bottoms no hul taps [?]*

If you were in Mobile today you would not fall in love with the place, outside “the wind and rain beats cold December” **[page 4]** And the mud, speaking within bounds, is a foot deep. And speaking of mud. We will – that is Joe Eskridge and myself – have somewhat the like of six dozen eggs in our room on Christmas and if we don’t celebrate the day in the good old fashioned style, it will be no faults of ours. Dicky is expected to contribute the light of his countenance on that occasion. Ask cousin Margaret how her cranberries hold out. Tell Betsy if she don’t send me her likeness immediately, why there will be an awful destruction of whalebone, starch, hair pins, tuck combs, dry goods, and other articles too numerous to mention, appertaining to the “get up” of a young lady — when I come home —

“Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, etc” Happy New Year

Your affect Bro

John K Hoyt

[X-writing on page 1] This letter is expected to arrive in time for the dinner, So don’t finish eating until after the mail is opened.

forming in the other end of the enclosure — and a drum rolls — with a wild hurrah we charge down upon them Oh what an exciting race — the Rifles were still dropping from the walls — and as they fell — would take up the cheer and away they would go —

We dashed around the Arsenal and — came very near pitching incontinently into the Guards Lafayette, who — from their dark blue uniform — we mistook for the federal troops —

I turned and looked back — the rifles were strung along from the walls to the arsenal all running and shouting It was ludicrous to see the different expressions (as each

men would come into line) departed upon their countenances - at finding that they had been charging our own troops.

I will now go back somewhat - the Sentinel was quietly pacing to and fro within the fortifications - when all of a sudden to his utter astonishment he beheld the Rifles - pouring over the walls. - like a great black head - instead of giving the alarm - he ran to the Gate to open it, (to see what was going on outside I suppose) by that time the Infantry had reached it; they rushed in and seized the sentry. While this was going on, the French Company Zouave fashion, had scaled the walls in a third place and formed immediately -

their drummer giving a roll upon
his drum. It was them, we
mistook for the garrison —
I ^{never} saw people more taken by
surprise. As the federal troops
rose, they poured out of their
barracks, some putting on
a coat, some their pants,
as they ran. The commanding
officer Capt "Reno" rushed
out, gazed around perfectly
bewildered. at the sudden change
in affairs — Old Col Leadbetter
demanded his sword in the
name of the Governor of the State
of Alabama. He immediately
surrendered unconditionally —
but rather pleasantly remarked
that he regretted exceedingly that
he had not been advised of
our coming — that he would
have extended a warmer welcome
to us —

Indeed had he known of it before
hand - we would have had
a hard fight for it -

We made a pretty good spec-
ulation for Ala. that day - we
captured - 1500 bbls of Gunpowder
20,000 stand of arms - with cannons
mortars - shells &c -

Come Sis, cant you give these
cheers - for we Mobile Boys -

Old Col Lead better - Complimented
us upon the spot - said from
the manner in which we scalded
their walls and charged -
expecting to be fired upon -
that he knew we would behave
well under fire -

The Infantry were left in charge
of the Fort and we took up
the line of march for the boat.
where we arrived - quite hungry
as we had been - all night
and day - without eating -

The Rifles - will relieve the
Infantry in two weeks -

I won't mind staying there
a bit - The grounds are
magnificently laid off - and
the buildings very handsome -
The other battalion - was no
less successful - they proceed-
ed down the Bay - and
very quietly took possession
of Fort Morgan, as they
were not garrisoned -

So nearly all the government
works in Ala are now in
the possession of State troops -
The war Steam Crusader
entered our harbor last
Thursday morning - some one
telegraphed - to the Governor -
and he immediately - telegraphed
back for us to take the
above mentioned works -
Hence our Expedition -

I commenced this letter in the
office - yesterday afternoon It
is now Sunday afternoon -
And I am writing in my room.
My Room Mates and some Friends
are discussing military matters
in general - and the prospects
of our having to go fight soon -
Telegraphic dispatches has just
reached us - that the taking of
the fort. has caused a great
sensation among the star dogs
at the Federal Capitol - Genl
Scott has ordered troops from
the frontiers - South - And
that several ~~ships~~ ^{ships} of war are
fitting out to come South -
Let them Come - They will
have to march over our bodies -
The rubicon has been crossed
and we are resolved to
be free - An immense
crowd - even down upon

the shores. the night of our
return - And we were cheered
from the shores to the army.

It is rumored that troops have
gone from Montgomery to Pensacola
to help the Floridians - capture
the government works - navy
yard &c -

Upon the whole there is
a prospect of having a lively
time - You have not answered
my letter yet - I hope you
are not a submissionist still -
Well - supper time has
come - good night love
to all -

Your affect Bro
John K. May Jr

I don't know whether this letter
will reach you or not, we
have not had any mails for some
time -

[About Jan 11, 1861]

[to his Sister, Clara Hoyt]

...man would come into line depicted upon their countenances, at finding that they had been charging our own troops.

I will now go back somewhat – The Sentinel was quietly pacing to and fro within the fortifications, when all of a sudden to his utter astonishment he beheld the [Mobile] Rifles, pouring over the walls. Like a blockhead, instead of giving the alarm, he ran to the gate to open it (to see what was going on outside I suppose). By that time the Infantry had reached it [the gate]; they rushed in and seized the sentry. While this was going on, the French Company,¹ Zouave fashion, had scaled the walls in a third place and formed immediately, their drummer giving a roll upon his drum. It was then we mistook for the garrison.

I never saw people more taken by surprise as the federal troops were. They poured out of their barracks, some putting on a coat, some their pants, as they ran. The commanding officer Capt “Reno” rushed out, gazed around perfectly bewildered at the sudden change of affairs. Old Col Leadbetter demanded his sword in the “name of the Governor of the state of Alabama.” He immediately surrendered unconditionally, but rather pleasantly remarked that he regretted exceedingly that he had not been advised of our coming, that he would have extended a warmer welcome to us.²

I commenced this letter in the office yesterday afternoon. It is now, Sunday afternoon, and I am writing in my room. My room Mates and some friends are discussing military matters in general, and the prospects of our having to go fight soon. Telegraphic dispatches has just reached us, that the taking of the forts has caused a great sensation among the war dogs at the Federal Capitol. Gen’l Scott has ordered troops from the frontiers – South – and that several sloops of war are fitting out to come south. Let them come. They will have to march over our bodies. The Rubicon has been crossed and we are resolved to be free. An immense crowd, even down upon the wharves [at Mobile] the night of our return and we were cheered from the wharves to the armory.

It is rumoured that troops have gone from Montgomery to Pensacola to help the Floridians capture the government works, navy yard, etc.³

¹ This is probably a sister militia from Mobile, perhaps “The Garde Lafayette”

² This is Captain Jesse Reno. See Hoyt’s letter of Sept 27, 1862

³ About six or seven militias from central Alabama were activated on Jan 8, 1861 (among them some that would later be formed with the Third Alabama Regiment) and immediately deployed to Pensacola; arriving there on Jan. 11th, they were combined with units from Mobile, under command of Lt Col Tennent Lomax. If Lomax had been given the go-ahead to seize Fort Pickens there, by the Florida Governor, the war may have started there instead of at Fort Sumter.

Upon the whole, there is a prospect of having a lively time. You have not answered my letter yet. I hope you are not a submissionist still. Well, supper time has come, good night, love to all.

Your Affect Bro
John K. Hoyt

I don't know whether this letter will reach you or not, we have not had any mails for some time.

Montgomery April 27th
Head Quarters 2nd Regiment
Alabama Vol

Dear Sir.

I am now in the
Quarter Masters office. and
will drop you a few hasty lines.
Am in the best of health - and
feel quite in my element at last
Will leave for Richmond tomorrow
so we understand. I have sent
in my application for a Lieutenant
in the Regular Army - signed by
the most influential men of Mobile.
It will be some weeks before I
hear of it. In the meantime I go
with my Company. Several thousand
troops are quartered here - and
our noble little Capital wears quite
a military aspect. my Company

seems to be the pet of Gov Moore.
and we stand at head Quarters
as being the best drilled Corps
in Ala. So probably in few
days. I will again be running
through the Old North State.
Could not some of you come
up to Goldsboro. and take
a ride up the road with us
We have some Eighteen No -
Carolinians in our company.
Among them a young Skinner from
Edenton. - We will raise our
voice - in fact - we will trans-
mogrify ourselves in one tremendous
yell - for the old State - when
we reach Goldsboro. I am writing
in the greatest haste. with a very
eccentric quill pen - turned bottom
upwards - ^{hence} the unusual sym-
etry of the writing. Love to all.
will write from Richmond.

Affectly Yours
John K. Boyd



Miss Clara B. Hoyt
Washington
North Carolina

Montgomery April 27 [1861]
Head Quarters 2nd Regiment
Alabama Vol

Dear Sis [Clara]

I am now in the Quarter Masters office and will drop you a few hasty lines. Am in the best of health, and feel quite in my element at last. Will leave for Richmond tomorrow, so we understand. I have sent in my application for a Lieutenancy in the Regular Army – signed by the most influential men of Mobile. It will be some weeks before I hear of it. In the mean time I go with my Company. Several thousand troops are quartered here, and our noble little Capital wears quite a military aspect. My Company seems to be the pet of Gov. Moore, and we stand at Head Quarters as being the best drilled Corps in Ala. So probably in a few days I will again be railing [?] through the Old North State – could not some of you come up to Goldsboro and take a ride up the road with us. We have some eighteen No. Carolinians in our company – among them a young skinner from Edenton. We will raise our voice – in fact – we will transmogrify ourselves in one tremendous yell – for the Old State – when we reach Goldsboro. I am writing in the greatest haste, with a very eccentric quill pen, turned bottom upwards – hence the unusual symmetry of the writing. Love to all – will write from Richmond.

Affectly Your Bro
John K Hoyt

[illegible]

to scale the walls of "Fort Sumter", the first to pass through territory belonging to the S. S. (Tennessee was not then out). Our route through So. Carolina and Georgia was a triumphal march. There was a Company so overwhelmed with favors - At every depot - immense crowds of men - women and children were gathered - and cheers and applause - for the Noble Rifles were frequent. Young ladies crowded to the cars and begged for garlands - flowers - through the windings. I sent all the bouquets, and little notes attached - encouraging us on to our duty and signed their names in full. I have several of the notes kept in my pocket. And must say that Georgia has more pretty girls than any country I have ever passed through. At Macon a wedding had just taken place, as the cars arrived - and the whole wedding party came down to the depot. I was standing on the platform and received a large and beautiful cake and bouquet from one of the bridesmaids. I kissed her - as we rode off. We received some more large pound cakes from the party. At Atlanta - we met a very enthusiastic reception, and as we went on through the entire route - passing through Tenn. We were not repaid so well. The Secessionists seemed somewhat afraid. And there always stood some old Fogys, in the background, with long and gloomy faces, who acted as a drawback to the enthusiastic.

But when we reached the "Old Dominion," heaven bless
the old State, what glorious receptions we met with.
Bristol was the first place we stopped at - one half
of the town is in this State, the other in Tenn. Our
Company was invited to a sumptuous Supper
at the town Hall of the town. which we did full
justice to. the Citizens read with each other in attendance.
Left Bristol at 4 O'clock in the morning. consequently
came through the mountains in the day time. The scenery
was magnificent. I shall not attempt to describe
it. It would be as impossible, as to attempt to tell
my emotions. during that eventful day in my life.
A chord of my nature, was touched - that had never
vibrated before. I sat with my head out of the window
and looked - and looked - until I seemed to grow
with some inward emotion. I forgot myself, forgot
my own identity. I saw only. Mountains. precipices -
rocks. and valleys. In fact. I can tell you nothing
at all. about my impressions, or any thing else -
We passed through a mountain just before dark.
The scenery grew wilder as night approached - for a
long ways. we wound along the sides of the mountains
and could look down precipices, hundreds of feet -
Reached Lynchburgh last Thursday morning -
and marched through town. and encamped outside
about half mile distant. in a large Oak Grove
on the mountain side. The Remains of the Regt
came a day or two after - and we now muster

a thousand strong. The ladies come out in crowds every afternoon, to see us. already know half the ladies of Lynchburgh. The other afternoon, a carriage drove up - containing an elderly lady and two young ones. the latter were perfectly beautiful. so of course I made a dive for the Carriage helped them out, and in so doing took hold of a couple of pair of hands that set my heart to dancing - obtained a view of four ankles - any one of which was enough to turn a man's head. Escorted them around the Camp - made myself agreeable - told them my name and learned theirs - In the mean time had introduced Joe Eckridge - my room - and my mate - to them - He escorted the little one and I the taller of the two. Commenced a desperate flirtation with her immediately - But I forgot to tell you their names. they are the Misses Langhorne - The tall one was the model of Barber's celebrated statue the "Coquette". I learned that the next morning - Of course that completed my discomfiture. Well next morning came a large basket filled with cakes - pickles - brandy peaches and ham - and a pretty note. They brought the Col. their father out - next time - and I received a cordial invitation to visit their house. They asked Geo. Dunslop, and myself, to go to church, and sing with them in the Choir, as all the young men had enlisted - and gone to Richmond. So yesterday morning - we brightened up our buttons - and repaired to "St Pauls". The Col took us up in the Choir, and we made ourselves useful and ornamental to that part of the building.



Miss Clara B Hoyt
Care Rufus Tucker Esqr
Raleigh
N^c Ca

Lynchburg Va
Head Quarters of 3rd Regmt A Vol
[Tuesday, May 7, 1861]

Dear Sis

I wrote you a few days since, from Bristol, telling of my arrival in Va. We stopped there a few hours, on our route for this place.

Our departure from Mobile was very sudden though not unexpected. Remained in Montgomery long enough to organize our Regiment and elected our officers. Mayor Withers of Mobile, elected Colonel. Lieut Col Lomax of Montg, & Major Battle. All of them tried men, and brave experienced officers. Our Regiment is called the crack Regt of Ala., and I am proud to say that my company stands first in the State. Upon arriving at Montgy our Captain "L. T. Woodruff" repaired to the Agt [Adjutant] Genl's office: "*Well Captain*" says Gov Moore, "*What do you wish for your Company?*" Thinking that we, like the remainder of the Volunteers, were not fully equipped. "*Marching Orders*" says our Capt. "*What - do you want nothing in the way of arms, accouterments, etc.?*" "*Nothing but marching orders, Sir.*" "*Would that all could say as much*" replied the Gov. "*You shall have them.*" So off we started, the pioneer company from the Gulf States. The first [page 2] to scale the walls of "Fort Stoddard," the first to pass through territory belonging to the U.S. (Tennessee was not then out). Our route through So Carolina⁴ and Georgia was a triumphal march, never was a company so overwhelmed with favors - at every depot, immense crowds of men, women and children were gathered, and cheers, and speeches, for the Mobile Rifles were frequent. Young ladies crowded to the cars and boquets [sic] and garlands showered through the windows. Nearly all the boquets had little notes attached, encouraging us on to our duty, and signed their names in full. I have several of the notes now in my knapsack. And must say that Georgia has more pretty girls than any country I have ever passed through. At Marietta, a wedding had just taken place as the cars arrived, and the whole wedding party came down to the depot. I was standing on the platform and received a large and beautiful cake and boquet from one of the Bridesmaids. I tossed her a kiss, as we rode off. We received some four or five large pound cakes from the party. At Atlanta, we met a very enthusiastic reception and so on through the entire route. Passing through Tenn: We were not received so well. The Secessionists seemed somewhat afraid, and there always stood some old Fogys, in the background, with long and gloomy faces, who acted as a drawback to the enthusiastic. [page 3] But when we reached the "Old Dominion," heaven bless the Old State, what glorious receptions we met with. Bristol was the first place we stopped at - one half of the town is in this State, the other in Tenn. Our Company was invited

⁴ He has misstated here: they did not pass through South Carolina; Marietta was on the line north to Chattanooga, then Knoxville, Bristol, etc.; all other letters and diaries confirm this route.

to a sumptuous Supper at the two hotels of the town, which we did full justice to, the citizens vied with each other in attentions. Left Bristol at 4 o'clock in the morning. Consequently came through the mountains in the daytime. The scenery was magnificent. I shall not attempt to describe it. It would be as impossible, as to attempt to tell my emotions during that eventful day in my life. A chord of my nature – was touched – that had never vibrated before. I sat with my head out of the window and looked, and looked, until I seemed to grow with some inward emotion. I forgot myself, forgot my own identity. I saw only. Mountains, precipices, rocks and valleys. In fact, I can tell you nothing at all about my impressions, or anything else. We passed through a mountain just before dark. The scenery grew wilder as night approached, for a long ways we wound along the sides of the mountains and could look down precipices hundreds of feet. Reached Lynchburg last Thursday morning, and marched through town, and encamped outside about half mile distant in a large Oak Grove on the mountain side. The remainder of the Regmt came a day or two after and we now muster [page 4] a thousand strong. The ladies come out in crowds every afternoon to see us. Already know half the ladies of Lynchburgh [sic]. The other afternoon a carriage drove up, containing an elderly lady and two young ones. The latter were perfectly beautiful, so of course I made a dive for the carriage, helped them out, and in so doing took hold of a couple of pair of hands that set my heart to dancing – obtained a view of four ankles any one of which was enough to turn a man's head. Escorted them around the Camp – made myself agreeable – told them my name and learned theirs. In the meantime had introduced Joe Eskridge – my room and mess mate – to them. He escorted the little one and I the taller of the two. Commenced a desperate flirtation with her immediately – But I forgot to tell you their names. They are the Misses Langhornes.⁵ The tall one was the model of Barbee's celebrated statue the "Coquette."⁶ I learned that the next morning. Of course that completed my discomfiture. Well, next morning came a large basket filled with cakes, pickles, brandy peaches and ham, and a pretty note. They brought the Col – their father out – next time, and I received a cordial invitation to visit their house. They asked Geo. Dunlap and myself to go to church and sing with them in the choir, as all the young men had enlisted, and gone to Richmond. So yesterday morning we brightened up our buttons, and repaired to "St Pauls." The Col took us up in the choir, and we made ourselves useful and ornamental to that part of the building.

[X-writing on page 1] Listened to the sermon very attentively at first, until it grew awful prosy, and had put nearly one half the congregation to sleep. The remainder of the forty minutes was spent in reading and writing notes to the fair "Coquette." Taking all things in consideration, I am having a most glorious time. Camp life agrees with me splendidly. It has been raining all day, so we have had to keep within our tents.

⁵ These ladies should not be confused with the five famous daughters of Chiswell Langhorne born in the next generation: Irene, Nancy "Lady Astor" etc.; but the Lynchburg branch of the same family.

⁶ William Randolph Barbee (1818-1868) studied in Florence; "Coquette" was one of his most famous sculptures; exhibited briefly in Mobile in 1858.

Charley Whitehurst⁷ is in my mess, and seems the happiest man in camp. He is the pet of the company and is called the "Baby." Every day brings presents of good things from the ladies and we are feasting all the time. Major Battle says that he is one of "our mess" and comes to my tent frequently in search of good things. Our officers say that Mess No. 1 lives higher than themselves. Never saw such clever people as they are here – if we buy anything in town, ten times to one they refuse to let us pay for them.

Ascended to the top of a very high hill near the camp yesterday and obtained a most magnificent view of the adjacent country. The Peaks of the Otter loomed up grandly in the southwest and the Blue Ridge stretched far away in the distance – on either side – a perfect sea of mountains. Received your letter a few days ago – it was forwarded from Mobile, and came on the same train with us. I am glad to hear [X-writing on page 2] that the people of Washington are beginning to be aroused. Hope that they will raise some military companies there. It is rumoured in camp that we are to leave for Norfolk tomorrow – don't know how true it is – though I suspect it is so. Gov Letcher telegraphed our Colonel a few days since, to repair to that place with this Regiment, but as we were not under the command of that individual – we did not go. I have no doubt but that he will influence President Davis to send us there. A Louisiana Regiment arrived yesterday – and one from Alabama today, so that now there must be some four thousand troops encamped here. I am told that five hundred Cherokee Indians arrived here today from Arkansas. If we leave tomorrow I will write again from Norfolk.⁸ I must now close. Love to all, hope to hear from home soon. Address your letters to Sergt Jno K Hoyt, Mobile Rifles, 3rd Regmt Ala Volunteers,

Your Affect Bro

Jno K. Hoyt

⁷ Charles C. Whitehurst was 28, hardly a baby. Son of a wealthy Baldwin Co. planter. He was discharged in October 1861 by purchase of a substitute.

⁸ 3rd Alabama Regiment departed Lynchburg for Norfolk: May 8, 1861

Camp Hard Times
March 5th 1862

Dear Mother

Now proceed by the reading
of this letter that we have again been moved. And could
you but see us at Camp 'Hard Times' you would pronounce
the name suitable to the location. After leaving the
Norfolk side some three weeks ago - we were encamped
on the railroad just at the outskirts of Portsmouth
~~in miserable houses and where the mud in dry weather~~
was nearly knee deep - were not being even so the
regiment in those quarters. The second battalion was
moved to this place last Thursday - I have found
mud at the other Camp - here we have mill ponds, lakes
rivers and creeks in our quarters. The Camp was
built by the 3rd Georgia - just before their removal to
Roanoke. The cabins are large and comfortable
and we are again living as we did in our old Camp
eight men in a cabin - If we were fish or ducks
we would be perfectly charmed with our new location
But as I am neither - can't say that I like so much
water. I have a notion of procuring me a canoe
to get about Camp in. However a few such days as
this and dry land will appear. We were treated
to quite a snow storm - night before last

But the sun coming out in all its glory quickly caused
the snow to disappear. I am now sitting in my shirt
sleeves enjoying a charming spring morning. The Camp
is only a humble habitation the residence of a Mr
Creely originally from Edenton. He is very kind to us
and I took supper with him a day or two ago.
You might have gone to Raleigh just as well as not
for the Yankees have not as yet possession of the
rail roads. And with the help of Providence the
3rd Ala Regiment and a few more sick. I very
much doubt that they ever will.

A great many people have left Norfolk -
~~and those who remain are just sending away~~
their plunder. Martial Law has been declared
over Norfolk Portsmouth and surrounding Country
by the President. So that every thing is under a
strict military rule now. All the liquor shops have
been closed - and perfect order prevails.

Capt Woodruff is engaged in recruiting for the
Company. He will send our officers and one private
to Albemarle next week to recruit. I have enlisted
with him again. so has Jimmy Howard. As soon
as a sufficient number of men has signed the
rolls we will proceed to organize and elect our
officers. The Boys speak of nominating me for the
first Lieutenantcy. Whether I will be elected or
not. of course I am unable to say. If any

with my chances for a commission in this company and I
" think very favourable at present. Still I will not
trust too confidently - as volunteers change their
opinions so often - Capt Woodruff has complimented
me frequently in the hearing of the company upon
my military capacity - And were the Officers
promoted instead of being elected. I should
be certain of a commission -

The prevailing opinion about here at present
is that Buinides will make a feint only at Suffolk
while his real aim will be to take possession of
Weldon - I think that the military authorities are
~~now well awake enough to frustrate his intentions~~

We look confidently for an action soon -

And should the opportunity offer - Your son hopes
to do his duty as a soldier - I shall place my life
at the disposal of my beloved country as long as she
needs it - Though our prospects look gloomy at
present - yet this is no time for despair - or melancholy
forebodings - I trust in Providence - and am sure
that we will yet conquer - Jimmy is well and
sends his love to all - I am in perfect health and
good spirits - And soon hope to have the pleasure
of writing to you - of a glorious victory achieved by our
arms - direct your letters as usual - and let me
hear from you soon -

Your Affectionate Son

John

Camp Hard Times
March 8th 1862

Dear Mother

You perceive by the heading of this letter that we have again been moved. And could you but see us at Camp "Hard Times" you would pronounce the name suitable to the location. After leaving the Norfolk side some three weeks ago, we were encamped on the rail road just at the outskirts of Portsmouth in miserable houses, and where the mud in dry weather was nearly knee deep. There not being room for the regiment in those quarters, the second battalion was moved to this place last Wednesday [March 5]. If we found mud at the other camp, here we have mill ponds, lakes, rivers and cricks in our quarters. The camp was built by the 3rd Georgia, just before their removal to Roanoke. The cabins are large and comfortable and we are again living as we did in our old Camp – eight men in a cabin. If we were fish, or ducks, we would be perfectly charmed with our new location. But as I am neither, can't say that I relish so much water. I have a notion of procuring me a canoe to get about camp in. However a few such days as this and dry land will appear. We were treated to quite a snow storm night before last. [page 2] But the sun coming out in all its glory quickly caused the snow to disappear. I am now sitting in my shirt sleeves enjoying a charming spring morning. The camp is only a hundred yards from the residence of Walter Creecy, originally from Edenton. He is very kind to us and I took supper with him a day or two ago. You might have gone to Raleigh just as well as not, for the Yankees have not as yet possession of the rail roads, and with the help of Providence, the 3rd Ala Regiment and a few more such, I may much doubt that they ever will.

A great many people have left Norfolk and those who remain are fast sending away their plunder. Martial law has been declared over Norfolk, Portsmouth, and surrounding Country by the President, so that everything is under a strict military rule now. All the liquor shops have been closed, and perfect order prevails.

Capt. Woodruff is engaged in recruiting for the Company. He will send an officer and one private to Mobile next week to recruit. I have reenlisted with him again – so has Jimmy Howard. As soon as a sufficient number of men have signed the roll, we will proceed to organize and elect our officers. The Boys speak of running me for the first lieutenancy. Whether I will be elected or not, of course I am unable to say. At any [page 3] rate my chances for a commission in this company are I think very favorable at present. Still I will not trust too confidently – as volunteers change their opinions so often. Cap't Woodruff⁹ has complimented me frequently in the hearing of the company upon my military capacity, and were the officers promoted instead of being elected, I should be certain of a commission.

⁹ Captain Lewis Woodruff (1815-1869) was the original captain of The Mobile Rifles; he was elected LTC of 36th Alabama Regiment on 5-13-62 and left his old company at Drury's Bluff, 5-18-62; He rose to the rank of Colonel, was wounded and retired.

The prevailing opinion about here at present is that Burnside will make a feint only at Suffolk, while his real aim will be to take possession of Weldon. I think that the military authorities are now wide awake enough to frustrate his intentions. We look confidently for an action soon – And should the opportunity offer – your son hopes to do his duty as a soldier. I shall place my life at the disposal of my beloved country as long as she needs it. Though our prospects look gloomy at present, yet this is no time for despair, or melancholy forebodings. I trust in Providence, and am sure that we will yet conquer. Jimmy is well and sends his love to all. I am in perfect health and good spirits. And soon hope to have the pleasure of writing to you of a glorious victory achieved by our arms. Direct your letters as usual, and let me hear from you soon.

Your Affect Son

John

Camp at Ipswich Church
April 2nd 1862

Dear Sir

I have been expecting a document from you for some time describing your Regt from Washington - But as none has come to hand - I conclude that you have not sent any - a very natural Conclusion - Probably I owe you a letter - I think it very possible - At any rate I have determined to send you what Jew Arentt would call - "not a letter, but a mere provoker of a letter." For the past two months I have been so completely upset - that I have lost the run of every thing - while at Camp "Hard Times", (Oh what an elegant place) I even lost the day of the week - So if I really have been owing you a letter all this long time - as I suppose I have - ascribe it to the fact that I have been perfectly bewildered by the brilliant marches and countermarches of the glorious Third General Huger has immortalized himself and us by those strategic movements of ours. I no doubt you have read all about them - for the papers must have been full of it - How we were ordered to Suffolk one day - how we were up all night cooking rations for three days - How we marched to Norfolk - how we marched through Norfolk - how the Old Ladies were ecstatic (joy at our leaving) how the young ones were lacking more - how the dogs barked - children screamed - chickens crew - how happy the members of other regiments looked at our departure - how long their

faces became - when they discovered that the young Ladies
were following us down to the Boat - half frantic with grief -
In fact how all Norfolk turned out - to witness our
departure - You must have read how we were carried
across to Portsmouth in ferry boats - how when we
reached there - instead of taking the cars to Suffolk
as ordered - a fresh set of orders - ordered us out to
"Oak Grove Camp," so called - because there were no oaks
within a mile of the place - How we were assured that
the Yankees had heard of our departure - and would
attack Norfolk - if we went away - How we ~~lived~~^{lived}
at Camp "Oak Grove," for two weeks - thirty two men in a pig
pen - of our food being mud and hard crackers -
How the 2nd Battalion (of which I have the honor of being
a member) was then moved to the afore mentioned
Camp "Hard times," built by the 3rd Georgia Reg -
How we led an amphibious life there for another week -
And how we finally marched back again through a
pouring rain - to our own Camp - Johnston's falling
back from Manassas - in comparison with this move-
ment dwindles into a mere holiday parade -

Can you wonder that I should forget that I was owing
you a letter - after all this -

I had the good fortune to witness part of the naval
fight in Hampton roads - That a glorious achievement -
We were then at Camp "Hard times," and had heard on
that (Saturday) morning that the Merrimac had gone
down the Bay - Consequently we were on the quiver

- Soon after dinner our ears were greeted with the sound of a solitary gun - then another - and another - and then a perfect thunder of noise burst forth - such as is seldom heard - For the next three hours the cannonading was deafening the very houses were shaken by the concussion - for you must remember that the heaviest of guns only were used - We could soon distinguish the firing of the "Patrick Henry" and "James Earl", passing the batteries at "Newport News". Finally the firing almost ceased - And then a broadside of twenty or thirty guns were fired faster than you could count - That was one of the frigates passing our batteries at Sewall's point and going to the assistance of the Congress. Night came on - and only an occasional gun was heard. Soon after dark the news was brought that the Cumberland had been sunk and the Congress run ashore. About 9 O'clock we could see a bright light in the north west - the sky was perfectly red - We thought that one of the frigates had been set on fire. About 12 O'clock I was awaked by the loudest explosion I had ever heard - the earth fairly shook - and the reverberations lasted for minutes - every one was awake and up - and conjecturing what it could have been - ^{my} heart fairly sank within me as I thought - 'what if it is the Albatross'. Every one was up early next morning listening with anxious ears for a renewal of the conflict. What a load of apprehensions was removed when we soon heard the cannon roaring as loud as ever - After breakfast the Battalion was marched down to where we could get a

view of the fight. ~~W~~ I was fortunate enough to get a
glap and could see the affair quite plainly. The
Abenisco fast aground at Newports News and
the Aberrimac some distance off. Shelling her at
her leisure. It was a beautiful sight to see the shells
bursting above - around and aboard of the Abenisco
Whilst looking a shell struck a small tug boat just
astern of the Abenisco - and bursting literally tore
her into - so that she sank immediately. I saw the
fight between the Abenisco and Aberrimac -

What a splendid fight it was on that Sunday Morning
when our victorious fleet came steaming back to Norfolk.
I have drawn several pictures of the Aberrimac - as she
appeared after the fight - and will send you one by the
earliest opportunity. Do write to me soon - and tell
me what has become of every body. Jimmy Howard had
a letter from Sallie to day telling him that Dr Taylor was
keeping house in Townsville - and that she would board
with him. I shall enclose a note to Mr Schenk - please
send it to him. I don't know where he is -

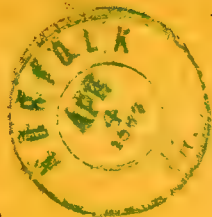
Jimmy received Abothers letter to day - from what she said
he must have been sending some gloomy accounts of our
eating department. And without cause I think for we have
plenty of every thing to eat and nothing to do - but dull
ourselves a day. In fact we are having too easy a time -
Love to all and do write soon

Your affect Bro
John

Serg't J. K. HOYT,

MOBILE RIFLES,
COMPANY K,

Third Regiment Alabama Volunteers,
Entrenched Camp, near Norfolk, Va.



Miss Clara B. Hoyt
Greenville
Pitt Co
N Carolina

Camp at Mosely's Church
April 2nd 1862
[In file as "1862 May"]

Dear Sis [Clara]

I have been expecting a document from you for some time describing your hegira from Washington. But as none has come to hand – I conclude that you have not sent any – a very natural conclusion. Probably I owe you a letter – I think it very possible. At any rate I have determined to send you what Jew[?] Averett would call “not a letter, but a mere provoker of a letter.” For the past two months I have been so completely upset, that I have lost the run of everything – while at Camp “Hard Times” (Oh what an elegant place) I even lost the day of the week. So if I really have been owing you a letter all this long time – as I suppose I have – ascribe it to the fact that I have been perfectly bewildered by the brilliant marches and countermarches of the glorious Third. General Huger¹⁰ has immortalized himself and us by those strategic movements of ours. I’ve no doubt you have read all about them – for the papers must have been full of it. How we were ordered to Suffolk one day – how we were up all night cooking rations for three days – How we marched to Norfolk – how we marched through Norfolk – how the Old Ladies were estactic [sic] (joy at our leaving) how the young ones were lachrymose – how the dogs barked – children screamed – chickens crew – how happy the members of other regiments looked at our departure – how long their [page 2] faces became when they discovered that the young Ladies were following us down to the Boat half frantic with grief. In fact how all Norfolk turned out to witness our departure. You must have read how we were carried across to Portsmouth in ferry boats – how when we reached there – instead of taking the cars to Suffolk as ordered – a fresh set of orders – ordered us out to “Oak Grove Camp” so called – because there were no oaks within a mile of the place. How we were assured that the Yankees had heard of our departure – and would attack Norfolk if we went away – How we lived at camp “Oak Grove” for two weeks – thirty two men in a pig pen – of our feed being mud and hard crackers – How the 2nd battalion (of which I have the honor of being a member) was then moved to the aforementioned Camp “Hard times” built by the 3rd Georgia Reg. – How we led an amphibious life there for another week – And how we finally marched back again through a pouring rain to our own Camp. Johnston’s falling back from Manassas – in comparison with this movement dwindles into a mere holiday parade –

Can you wonder that I should forget that I was owing you a letter – after all this.

I had the good fortune to witness part of the naval fight in Hampton roads – What a glorious achievement – We were then at Camp “Hard Times” and had

¹⁰ Major Gen. Benj. Huger had responsibility for this area of Tidewater Virginia and North Carolina. It was through his incompetence, Roanoke Island was lost in Feb. 1862, which necessitated the eventual evacuation of Norfolk.

heard on that (Saturday) morning that the Merrimac had gone down the bay – Consequently we were on the qui vive.

[page 3] Soon after dinner [i.e. noon] our ears were greeted with the sound of a solitary gun – then another – and another – and then a perfect thunder of noise burst forth – such as is seldom heard For the next three hours the cannonading was deafening the very houses were shaken by the concussion – for you must remember that the heaviest of guns only were used – We could soon distinguish the firing of the “Patrick Henry” and “Jamestown” passing the batteries at “Newport News.” Finally the firing almost ceased. And then a broadside of twenty or thirty guns were fired faster than you could count. That was one of the frigates passing our batteries at Sewell’s Point and going to the assistance of the Congress. Night came on – and only an occasional gun was heard. Soon after dark the news was brought that the Cumberland had been sunk and the Congress run ashore. About 9 o’clock we could see a bright light in the northwest. The sky was perfectly red. We thought that one of the frigates had been set on fire. About 12 o’clock I was awaked by the loudest explosion I had ever heard – the earth fairly shook – and the reverberations lasted for minutes – every one was awake and up – and conjecturing what it could have been – my heart fairly sank within me as I thought “what if it was the Merrimac.” Every one was up early next morning listening with anxious ears for a renewal of the contest. What a load of apprehensions was removed when we soon heard the cannon roaring as loud as ever. After breakfast the Battalion was marched down to where we could get a [page 4] view of the fight. I was fortunate enough to get a glass and could see the affair quite plainly – The Minnesota fast aground at Newport News and the Merrimac some distance off shelling her at her leisure. It was a beautiful sight to see the shells bursting above – around and aboard of the Minnesota. Whilst looking, a shell struck a small tug boat just astern of the Minnesota and bursting literally tore her into [sic] – so that she sank immediately – I saw the fight between the Monitor and Merrimac.

What a splendid sight it was on that Sunday morning, when our victorious fleet came steaming back to Norfolk. I have drawn several pictures of the Merrimac – as she appeared after the fight, and will send you one by the earliest opportunity. Do write to me soon – and tell me what has become of every body. Jimmy Howard had a letter from Sallie today telling him that Dr Taylor was keeping house in Townsville and that she would board with him. I shall enclose a note to Mr Schenck – please send it to him. I don’t know where he is.

Jimmy received Mothers letter today – from what she said he must have been sending some gloomy accounts of our eating department. And without cause I think for we have plenty of every thing to eat and nothing to do – but drill – once or twice a day.

In fact we are having too easy a time –

Love to all and do write soon

Your affect Bro

John

Camp at Mosely's Church¹¹
April 28th 1862

Dear Sis

I have just finished two drawings for you, which I shall send along with this letter. One of them the fight in the Roads – Is not an original drawing of mine – that is the idea is not original – Whilst in town last week, I saw a drawing of the fight, by an eye witness. It was quite a beautiful picture. So after coming out to camp – I drew one from memory. It has many imperfections. Still it will give you a correct idea of the engagement. The “Patrick Henry” and “Jamestown” are seen in the distance – running the blockade of batteries at Newport News, and coming up to join our little fleet.

The Batteries are concealed from view by the trees but the smoke may be seen rising above them. I did not have room for all of our brave little gun Boats so made the little “Teaser” conspicuous as she is firing her bow guns into the Congress. The Cumberland is represented in the act of sinking – a brave man fought that ship. As the lower deck became submerged [page 2]: he fought with his upper guns. As the ship goes down stern forward he fires his bow guns. The “Congress” is pouring her broadside into the “Virginia.” But the balls glance like marbles from her iron sides.

One or two shells are bursting over the rigging and on the deck of the “Congress” – thrown from our gun boats – The “Patrick Henry,” and “Jamestown” are paying their respects to the camps on the Point.

The other drawing – Is an original one. This is the third I have drawn of these and have improved upon each. The fleet are returning in triumph to the City on Sunday morning – I witnessed the scene – and have drawn them as they appeared whilst passing “Lamberts Point” where our battalion was marched to in time to witness the fight with the Monitor. I have made one omission – the crew of the “Virginia” were all mustered on the deck – and as they passed us we gave them three cheers – which they returned. The “Patrick Henry” leads the way followed by the “Beaufort” and Raleigh. The Jamestown brings up the rear. The smoke stack of the Virginia was literally riddled. I am afraid I did not put half enough holes in it. And when I tell you that Capt. Buchanan and the Pilot stood alongside of it – you will wonder how it was [page 3] possible for them ever to escape. The flag staff of the Virginia was shot away – only the stump left. I have made it short. The third port from the stern is the one fired at so often by the Monitor. It was struck six times nearly in the same place – and one of the timbers was started – You can see the impressions of the shot on her sides– made as they glanced – she was struck some seventy five times in all.

So you can see how the iron monster looks – does she look like any boat you have ever seen? The very sight of her terrifies the Yankees. The small pyramid

¹¹ Camp Mosely's Church was the 3d Alabama's winter camp, which they built and first occupied in late November 1861. It was located northeast from Norfolk, probably near the location of the present day airport. Their quarters were well built and rather luxurious for the era: 16 X 18' cabins for @ eight men, with brick fireplaces and cupboards.

you see forward of the chimney – is the pilot house, made of solid iron – it has four small holes – one on each side, to see through. The Pilot – however – was upon the deck during the action. The boxes you see extending out forward is a mere breastwork of timber some two feet high – placed upon her real bow – which is under water – to give her greater steering facilities. She carried two life boats into the fight but they were entirely shot away. She also had a ventilator aft of the chimney as well as the one in front – that was also shot away. She is very fast – her speed being three knots more than ever. I have entered somewhat into details knowing that you would like to know all about this vessel.

[page 4] I visited town last week and spent the anniversary of our departure from Mobile – the 24th. Visited all of my lady friends and had plenty of fun.

Well, we are all Conscripits now. The Regiment will be reorganized and officers elected probably in the course of the next week. Jimmy is well. – I received a letter from Sam Schenck a week or two ago – saying he was trying to effect an exchange from his Company to ours. But I suppose the Conscript Bill will prevent it now unless he had been exchanged already before the bill had passed.

How gloomy our prospects seem now – New Orleans has fallen – the worst blow yet. A dispatch was received late this afternoon, saying that the French Consul had prohibited the bombardment of the City. Five Yankee gun boats are anchored off the City. Also that the iron clad battery “Louisiana” had captured the frigate “Niagara” and four gunboats. Too good to be true I am afraid. It is growing late. I must bid you good night. Love to all let me hear from you soon –

Your affect Brother

John

Camp at Drewry's Bluff
May 20th 1862

Dear Sis

In active service at last. After twelve long
tiresome months of garrison duty - or rather idleness - my ardent
wish has been gratified and I am now in the field sure enough.
I don't remember whether I have written home since the evacuation
of Norfolk or not. I have even forgotten the day of the week
and lost the run of things generally. I went through the sad
task of bidding my kind friends in Norfolk adieu one Sunday
night - (I don't know how long ago) and at day-break on Monday
the evacuation ^{commenced} we marched to town through a pouring rain. It
seems as though nature was weeping at such a disgraceful
march. The citizens looked gloomily on as we marched down
main street to the depot. And the regiment - how differently
it looked compared to just one year ago. When we arrived
from the far south. Then as we marched up the same street
the buoyant step and gay smiling faces of the boys was
greeted by the frowns of the lookers on. But now the light tread
and smiles were gone. The boys looked dispirited and disappointed.
We were giving up Norfolk and our friends without a blow.

We were sent to Suffolk - and remaining there two
days then proceeded to Malden - where we were gratified at
the intelligence that we were to remain and guard the
Rail Road Bridge. What grumblers we all became. Especially
when we heard that "Stonewall Jackson" had asked for
ten thousand additional men to push the war northward.

After several days had elapsed the gratifying intelligence at last came that we must proceed forthwith to Petersburg. Then all the enthusiasms which had lain dormant so many months kindled afresh - and as we left the depot cheer after cheer - told how eager the Boys were for the fray. Petersburg was reached about twelve O'clock at night and we slept in a church yard - Next morning we pitched our Camp on the opposite side of the river in a beautiful spot among the hills. That night at twelve O'clock we were suddenly ordered to leave. No time was given to pack up so tents baggage - every thing was left behind - and we again marched to the depot. Conjecture was busy as to our probable destination but the "General" was so pleased for the first time no one knew where we were going - Officers and all were alike ignorant. The Cars could not contain us all - so my Company was marched back to Camp - where we obtained a good night's rest and started early next morning. After riding some ten miles Cannonading was plainly heard. It seemed to greatly increase the impatience of the Boys as we thought that the regiment was probably engaged. The Cars were delayed nearly an hour at a station during which time the firing increased. At last the Cars stopped some seven miles this side of Richmond and we were marched through the woods in the direction of the firing. Major Forsythe was along and he gave us the quick step. Ever many minutes elapsed we could hear the shells tearing through the woods. Directly in our path was a tree as large as a man's body - cut down by a shell - we could then see them lying in all directions.

Coming to a field, we marched through it - and here we found several formidable looking institutions lying scattered about which upon inspection - proved to be shells of curious make. The owner of that field will have very little to say for it was elegantly furrowed. The road then led through a pine thicket - here we found two wagon loads of ammunition. The drivers were in distress - for one of the teams had been killed about five minutes previous by a shell. Just then a wounded man was carried past on a litter. His fellow one of his arms had been blown off and he was groaning piteously. The cannonading now suddenly ceased and in a few minutes we heard a brisk firing of musketry. It proceeded from the rifle pits - and the enemy's gun boats were fast retreating down the river. We now ascertained that we were only a hundred yards in rear of the battery - the most dangerous place we could possibly have gone to. But our gallant little dragoons not knowing where the regiment was had made a bee line in the direction of the firing. One company of the Regiment worked some of the guns at the Battery and another was sent to the rifle pits where some of them got several shots at the Yankees. The loss on our side was small some were killed and five wounded. But for the carrying in of some of the bombshells at the battery - this would not have happened. The men were exposed to all the fire whilst clearing away the rubbish around the guns. It was here that poor General the bloodshipman met his death. He was a Marylander and had only been south one month. The fire of the sharpshooters must have proved very fatal - as our pickets

report that the Yankees buried some sixty bodies next day
at City Point - The day following I was sent with
fifty men to mount guns on the Battery. We worked
hard all day and part of the night - without a mouthful
of any thing to eat. Indeed for more than two days
I had nothing but two or three hard crackers to eat
we have been sleeping on the ground since our arrival
here - untill last night when our tents and baggage arrived
and I enjoyed the luxury of a Camp Cot and some
clean clothes - On the day before yesterday - scouts brought
information that ten Gun Boats were coming up the river.
Genl Abner instantly sent my Company to the rifle pits
along the banks of the river. We worked hard all day
digging our pits and throwing ~~of our equipments~~
and remained in them untill the day following - when
we were relieved - It proved to be a false alarm -

Father came down from Richmond a day or two ago and
spent two or three hours with me - I carried him through
the battery and into the woods - where the trees were lying
in every direction - cut down by shells. I picked up one
item the other day - and that was - never to get behind a tree
when shells are flying - unless it is six feet through
the battery is manned by naval officers and the crews of
the Abernethy - and other Gun Boats - Saw our old friend
Lieut Abner there - he enquired particularly about you -
He has quite recovered from his wound - I am now
Captain of this Company - Capt Woodruff having been
elected to a Lieut Col. position in a Regt in Ala - such
is the fortune of war - Jimmy and Jimmy Howard are
both well - Tell Mr Schenck and Allen Brist if they are
coming to make haste about it - Direct your letters for
the present to Richmond - love to all -

Affectly Yours Brother John

Miss Clara R. Hoyt
Greenville

Pitt. Co

N. Carolina

Camp at Drewry's Bluff
May 20, 1862

Dear Sis

In active service at last. After twelve long tiresome months of garrison duty or rather idleness – my ardent wish has been gratified and I am now in the field sure enough. I don't remember whether I have written home since the evacuation of Norfolk or not. I have even forgotten the day of the week and lost the run of things generally. I went through the sad task of bidding my kind friends in Norfolk adieu. One Sunday night (I don't know how long ago) and at daybreak on Monday the evacuation commenced. We marched to town through a pouring rain. It seems as though nature was weeping at such a disgraceful move. The citizens looked gloomily on, as we marched down Main street to the depot. And the regiment – how differently it looked compared to just one year ago, when we arrived from the far south. Then as we marched up the same street the buoyant step and gay smiling faces of the boys was greeted by the cheers of the lookers on. But now the light tread and smiles were gone – the boys looked dispirited and disappointed.

We were sent to Suffolk and remaining there two days, then proceeded to Weldon, where we were gratified at the intelligence that we were to remain and guard the Rail Road Bridge. What grumblers we all be now. Especially when we heard that "Stonewall Jackson" had asked for ten thousand additional men to push the war northward [page 2] After several days had elapsed the gratifying intelligence at last came that we must proceed forthwith to Petersburg. Then all the enthusiasm which had lain dormant so many months kindled afresh and as we left the depot cheer after cheer told how eager the Boys were for the fray.

Petersburg was reached about twelve o'clock at night and we slept in a church yard. Next morning we pitched our Camp on the opposite side of the river in a beautiful spot among the hills. That night at twelve o'clock we were suddenly ordered to leave. No time was given to pack up – so tents, baggage, everything was left behind, and we again marched to the depot. Conjecture was busy as to our probable destination but the "Third" was nonplussed for the first time – no one knew where we were going. Officers and all were alike ignorant. The cars could not contain us all, so my Company was marched back to camp, where we obtained a good night's rest and started early next morning.

After riding some ten miles, cannonading was plainly heard. It served to greatly increase the impatience of the Boys as we thought that the regiment was probably engaged. The cars were delayed nearly an hour at a station, during which time the firing increased. At last the cars stopped some seven miles this side of Richmond and we were marched through the woods in the direction of the firing. Major Forsyth was along and he gave us the quick step. Ere many minutes elapsed, we could hear the shells tearing through the woods. Directly in our paths was a tree as large as a mans body, cut down by a shell. We could then see them lying in all directions. [page 3] Coming to a field we marched through it and here we found several formidable looking institutions lying scattered about

which upon inspection, proved to be shells of curious make. The owner of that field will have very little ploughing [sic] to do, for it was elegantly furrowed.

The road then led through a pine thicket – here we found two wagon loads of ammunition. The drivers were in distress – for one of the mules had been killed about five minutes previous by a shell. Just then a wounded man was carried past on a litter – poor fellow one of his arms had been blown off and he was groaning piteously. The cannonading now suddenly ceased and in a few minutes we heard a brisk firing of musketry ahead. It proceeded from the rifle pits and the enemy's gun Boats were fast retreating down the river. We now ascertained that we were only a hundred yards in rear of the battery – the most dangerous place we could possibly have gone to. But our gallant little Major not knowing where the regiment was had made a bee line in the direction of the firing.

One company of the Regiment worked some of the guns of the battery and another was sent to the rifle pits, where some of them got several shots at the Yankees. The loss on our side was small, some seven killed and five wounded. But for the caving in of one of the bombproofs at the battery – this would not have happened. The men were exposed to all the fire whilst clearing away the rubbish around the gun. It was here that poor Carroll, the Midshipman, met his death. He was a Marylander and had only been south one month. The fire of the sharp shooters must have proved very fatal, as our pickets [page 4] report that the Yankees buried some sixty bodies next day at City Point.

The day following I was sent with fifty men to mount guns on the battery. We worked hard all day and part of the night, without a mouthful of anything to eat. Indeed for more than two days I had nothing but two or three hard crackers to eat.

We have been sleeping on the ground since our arrival here, until last night when our tents and baggage arrived and I enjoyed the luxury of a Camp Cot and some clean clothes. On the day before yesterday, scouts brought information that ten gun Boats were coming up the river. Gen'l Mahone instantly sent my Company to the rifle pits along the banks of the river. We worked hard all day digging new pits and throwing up embankments and remained in them until the day following, when we were relieved. It proved to be a false alarm.

Father came down from Richmond a day or two ago and spent two or three hours with me. I carried him through the battery and into the woods, where the trees were lying in every direction cut down by shells. I picked up one item the other day and that was never to get behind a tree when shells are flying unless it is six feet through. The Battery is manned by naval officers and the crews of the Merrimac and other gun Boats. Saw our old friend Lieut. Minor there, he inquired particularly about you. He has quite recovered from his wound.

I am now Captain of this Company. Capt. Woodruff having been elected to a Lieut. Colonelcy in a Regt in Ala – such is the fortune of war. Jimmy [Hoyt] and Jimmy Howard are both well. Tell Mr Schenck and Allen Grist [?] if they are coming, to make haste about it. Direct your letters for the present to Richmond – love to all,

Affect'ly Your Brother
John

In camp near Richmond
June 13th 1862

Dear Sis

Your letter was received yesterday. I was particularly glad to hear from you, after hearing of the affair at Tranter's Creek, thinking that the Yankees might visit Greenville in retaliation. Father has doubtless reached home by this time and has told you how I am. And now while I think of it. I wish you to send me by him when he returns to Richmond, two prs drawers, and some socks. The drawers you will find in my trunk, the socks I would like you to get in the country as all those in the trunk are too thin.

Jimmy is still at Mr Lancasters. I received a note from him today saying that he would come out to camp on Monday. If you could see me now you would say that I am writing under difficulties. I have managed to procure a candle, my writing desk is my mess chest, my seat – two mallets – one placed above the other, and I have to pay a strict attention to the laws of equilibrium, or else over I go. The candle, which by the way is remarkably weak in its back and has to be continually propped up, has attracted a swarm of bugs of all sizes and species. They are continuously popping into the blaze, and are crawling all over the paer. Quite an elegant field for an entomologist, but as I am not one, or at least a very poor one, I have classed them all as the species nuisance – genus hum – I came very near being guilty of a pun, but recovered in time to prevent it. You doubtless wish to know what I am doing. My principal exertions are confined to the subsistence department, as provisions are remarkably scarce and difficult to procure.

[page 2] Every day or two I go on a foraging expedition around the country. Some three days ago, after tightening my sword belt for the third time in one week, I came to the conclusion that if my larder was not replenished, and that speedily, I would soon become so thin that a bullet would go on both sides of me. So Jimmy Howard and I started, and after going some distance finally came to a house, which judging from appearance promised something eatable. Our eyes were gratified by the sight of various squads of goslings, chickens, ducks, etc. So over the fence we went, but approaching within charging distance, found them jealously guarded by a venerable sow of Africa. Who informed us that "all the white folks had been and gone better'n three weeks" and that the poultry were not for sale. She also informed us that two old ladies of color, still resided in the kitchen. We soon made a bargain with them to cook us some corn bread. And whilst that was cooking concluded to push our researches a little further in the neighborhood. We soon found ourselves in a swamp, whereupon a halt being made, a council was held whether it was best to proceed or fall back. The crow of a chicken ahead determined us, so an onward movement was made, which after falling off of some logs into the water, finally brought us to another large house. This time the white folks were to home. The old gentleman of the manor was in

the garden working with his jacket off, surrounded by a whole bevy of white headed boys.

We approached and made known our errand, whereupon the aforesaid old gentleman, straightened himself, wiped his forehead with a red bandanna and remarked "That he didn't know, whether [page 3] he could let us have any provisions or not as they were awful scarce – he would call his daughter however and ask her. We then discovered in the far end of the garden among the strawberry beds, an immense sun bonnet, with a female form under it. While making this discovery, the old gentleman called out "Margaret" – no response – "Mar-ge-ret" – no reply – "My daughter" – no answer – "daugh-ter-r" – ditto – "Oh Mag-g-g-" – still no answer – "You Mag" – short and emphatic – "Why d—m – it, I believe she is gone deaf." Which last remark led me to suppose that the aforesaid old gentleman was somewhat choleric. Whether Miss Mag wished to prove that her father was in the wrong, or whether the calls had just penetrated beneath the huge sun bonnet, I know not, but she now turned and came towards us. A close inspection showed her to be remarkably pretty. So I put on my best bow and repeated my request. She told us that we could get some bread and some buttermilk, but they had no bacon to spare. So while she went to the house to have the bread cooked, Jimmy and I paid the agreeable to the old one. We discussed gardening in all its branches. I am sure that the old man was convinced that I knew nothing at all about it. He then invited us in the house, where we discussed the war. The daughter again made her appearance, and I addressed myself to her. Seeing her greatly amused at something, I looked around and saw that Jimmy was standing with his back towards us in the porch, and she was smiling, at the dilapidated appearance of his pants. Poor Jimmy, it came very near being the death of him. To make a long story short, we had our haversacks filled with corn bread, and with a gallon of buttermilk, started towards camp.

[page 4] Three days ago, I was sent upon picket with my company. It was raining of course. We were not allowed to have fires, so for twenty four hours, we soaked it in the woods. Oh it was perfectly delightful. This morning at 3 o'clock, I was aroused and ordered to form my company, to go upon a scouting expedition. Five companies of us started and about a mile from camp I was ordered to deploy my company through the woods and to proceed cautiously until I found the whereabouts of the Yankees. I deployed them accordingly and after scouring the woods for a mile, came within hearing of the enemy's camp. Hearing a party ahead of us, and going towards the right – apprehensive that they might turn my flank and attack us in the rear – I fell back some distance, and after waiting an hour, and hearing nothing, I again gave the signal to forward. It was dangerous work as the woods were so thick, it was impossible to see ten yards ahead. We then passed to the right of the camp, I again ordered a halt and sent two men ahead to reconnoiter. They had not proceeded more than a hundred yards, before I observed them signaling to some one ahead, and then instantly jumping behind a tree. One of them crawled back and reported that we were within two hundred yards of the Yankee pickets. I sent a man back to Major Forsyth – who commanded the party – to report our situation. He sent us word to

fall back slowly, which we did without any further preventing [sic]. We had accomplished our object, which was to find out the whereabouts of the enemy.

You ask is Mess No. 1 escaped in the late fight. Not entirely. Jno Moore from Greensboro Ala and a cousin of Mrs Rodman's was shot and I am afraid died soon afterwards. He was seen by some [X-writing on page 3] in an ambulance – very badly wounded – and going toward Richmond. I have ---- for him in Richmond – three days myself – have had him advertised for and caused diligent search to be made for him, but without success. Poor fellow his fate is a mystery. Wm McKerrell¹² also, of my mess, is badly wounded, but is doing [better]. Wm Ellis, of the same mess was badly wounded and taken prisoner. The two D---- were sick in Richmond at the time. Henry Donaldson was complimented by the Major for his gallant conduct. Jimmy Howard fought gallantly, as indeed did all the company, not a single man flinched. They all appeared to be coolest when under the hottest of the fire. It made me shed tears that morning, after coming out of that slaughter pen, to find so many old familiar faces gone. More than half of the company, who went into the fight, were killed or wounded. Two have died since of their wounds, making total killed fourteen. It is quite late now and I must close, as I feel sleepy. Let me hear from you soon,

Your affect Bro

John

¹² McKerrell did not join the regiment until June 21, 1861, when he was *elected* to The Mobile Rifles (At this stage, the Mobile militias were adamantly exclusive); he survive this wound and the war, but did not return to the regiment. He transferred to Cavalry and surrendered at Vicksburg in July '63.

Captn 3rd Reg Ala 10th
New Ric^hmond July 12/62

Dear Sir

I am once more in camp
enjoying the rough luxuries of a soldiers
life - I started from Richmond on
Wednesday morning to hunt for my Regt
After marching down the country all
day - I met some wagons belonging to
the 5th Ala - in one of them was one of
my Greenstons friends - who told me
that the regiment had been sent up
to the York river R Road - and that
I was going directly away from it -
So I rode back to our sick camp
some three miles from Richmond
and spent the night - with some of
my Company who had been left behind
sick - Next morning I made an
early start - and by one o'clock had
marched fourteen miles - which was
doing tolerably well for a convalescent
I thought - Then I met with one of our
wagons - and was told that the brigade
was encamped three miles further down
the road - and that they would come
past in the afternoon - So I went
up to a house near by - and helped
the good woman churn her butter - and
helped myself most bountifully to

the buttermilk when I had finished
The old gentleman of the house told me
that G. General of the federal generals had
their head quarters there previous to the fight.
Quite a number of Northern papers were
there. and I amused myself and
passed the afternoon in looking at
pictures of the splendid charges made by
the "Geds." in the battle of Seven pines
~~from an special artist who was there.~~

and who I have no doubt saw it
from the 6th story window of his house
in New York - Now as far as my limited
experience goes I saw them make one or
two splendid charges - but they were
all to the rear -

Reverous a nous
mountons - The Brigade came past
about 5 o'clock in the afternoon when
I joined them - and came back
to our present camp - about three miles
from Richmond.

Alas it is a sad
sight to see the once glorious looking
"Third." Still glorious - but at what
a price - As they came along I scarcely
recognised them - There are the thousands
men who left Norfolk - but yesterday it
seems - young - fresh and hearts buoyant
and light at the prospect of coming
contests - Among ^{these} the pride and best
blood of glorious old Alabama.

Is it possible that those two hundred
with their dusty uniforms - torn and
blackened in the fire onset - faces
bronzed - and smoke begrimed - is
it possible that those are all who are
left of the one thousand - alas too
true - But the brass faces - and bouyant
tread - shows - them still unconquered
that they are victors of a hard fought
field - Such were the thoughts - that
rushed upon me as I stood upon a
hill and watched them defiling along
the road below - Yes - my Regiment
has again suffered terribly - My Company's
loss - was three killed and thirteen wounded
Two more died yesterday of their wounds
and two are despaired of - The Reg
has lost in this two fights - nearly four
hundred and fifty men - almost half -
Then so many are sick - that we can
only muster two hundred for duty -
Our flag was shot entirely to pieces - four
or five men were killed with it - and
the last one who bore it - brought out about
thirty inches of the staff only - One of
the Color guard - a corporal from my Company
a brave little fellow about nineteen years
old - and very pious - snatched the color
from the hands of the color sergeant as

he fell - and bearing it aloft rushed
ahead - crying to them to follow him -
brave little fellow - before he had gone
many paces - a bullet pierced his brain
and falling upon his knees - with hands
clasped and eyes lifted to heaven - so
died - Jimmy Howard was wounded
in two places - both through the leg -
no bones broken - He is at the house of
~~his~~ ~~relatives~~ - one of the firms - of ~~his~~
a Lancaster ~~son~~ - and doing very
well - Sallie is coming on to see him -
I received Mothers letter to day Jimmy
brought it out to me - I dont think there is any
necessity for being alarmed about Jimmy
He is getting on very well has returned
to Camp - as for myself - I feel
quite well now - George Dinslow is
now brevet ~~and~~ ^{1st} Lieut of the Company
neither of the officers were hurt in
the fight - Do write often - I
have not received but one letter from
home in three weeks - Father has
told you all the news - so dont
write any more - Love to all and
write soon -

Your affect Bro
John



Mrs. & Lora B. Gay
Guinevere
Box 60
Valparaiso

capt 3rd Reg Ala ist Ala
Near Richmond July 12/62

Dear Sir

I am once more in camp
enjoying the rough luxuries of a soldiers
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Wednesday morning to hunt for my Regt
After marching down the country all
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the road - and that they would come
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helped myself most bountifully to

the buttermilk when I had finished
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that G. General of the federal generals had
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Quite a number of Northern papers were
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neither of the officers were hurt in
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told you all the news - so dont
write any more - Love to all and
write soon -

Your affec^d Bro
John



Miss Clara B. Gay
Friend
Rich
124 avonlea

In Camp 3rd Reg Ala Vols
Near Richmond, July 12/62

Dear Sis

I am once more in Camp enjoying the rough luxuries of a soldiers life. I started from Richmond on Wednesday morning [July 9] to hunt for my Regt. After marching down the country all day, I met some wagons belonging to the 5th Ala – in one of them was one of my Greensboro friends – who told me the regiment had been sent up to the York river RRoad, and that I was going directly away from it. So I rode back to our sick camp some three miles from Richmond and spent the night with some of my company who had been left behind sick. Next morning I made an early start and by one o'clock had marched fourteen miles – which was doing tolerably well for a convalescent I thought. There I met with one of our wagons, and was told that the brigade was encamped three miles further down the road, and that they would come past in the afternoon. So I went up to a house near by, and helped the good woman churn her butter, and helped myself most bountifully to [page 2] the buttermilk when I had finished. The old gentleman of the house told me that several of the federal generals had their headquarters there previous to the fight. Quite a number of Northern papers were there – and I amused myself and passed the afternoon in looking at pictures of the splendid charges made by the “Feds” in the battle of Seven Pines “from our special artist who was there” and who I have no doubt saw it from the 6th story window of his house in New York. Now as far as my limited experience goes, I saw them make one or two splendid charges – but they were all to the rear – Revenous a nous moutons – The Brigade came past about 5 o'clock in the afternoon when I joined them, and came back to our present camp, about three miles from Richmond. Alas it is a sad sight to see the once glorious looking “Third.” Still glorious, but at what a price. As they came along I scarcely recognized them. Where are the thousand men who left Norfolk but yesterday it seems – young, fresh and hearts buoyant and light at the prospect of coming contests. Among them the pride and best blood of glorious old Alabama.

[page 3] Is it possible that those two hundred with their dusty uniforms, torn and blackened in the fierce onset, faces bronzed – and smoke begrimed – is it possible that those are all who are left of the one thousand – alas too true. But the brave faces, and buoyant tread, shows them still unconquered. That they are victors of a hard fought field. Such were the thoughts, that rushed upon me as I stood upon a hill and watched them defiling along the road below. Yes – my regiment has again suffered terribly – My Company's loss was three killed and thirteen wounded. Two more died yesterday of their wounds and two are despaired of. The Reg. has lost in the two fights, nearly four hundred and fifty men – almost half – Then so many are sick – that we can only muster two hundred for duty.

Our flag was shot entirely to pieces, four or five men were killed with it, and the last one who bore it, brought out about thirty inches of the staff only. One of the color guard, a corporal from my company, a brave little fellow about nineteen years old¹³ – and very pious – snatched the color from the hands of the color

¹³ Cpl. William Hamilton Treat; the sergeant he took the flag from, prob. Thos. Traylor

sergeant as [page 4] he fell and bearing it aloft rushed ahead – crying to them to follow him – brave little fellow – before he had gone many paces, a bullet pierced his brain and falling upon his knees, with hands clasped and eyes lifted to heaven, so died. Jimmy Howard was wounded in two places, both through the leg – no bones broken. He is at the house of Mr. Williams, one of the firm of Jno A Lancaster & Son, and doing very well. Sallie is coming out to see him.

I received Mothers letter today, Jimmy brought it out to me. I don't there is any necessity for being alarmed about Jimmy. He is getting on very well, has returned to camp. As for myself, I feel quite well now. George Dunlap is now brevet 2nd Lieut. of the Company. Neither of the officers were hurt in the fight. Do write oftener – I have not received but one letter from home in three weeks. Father has told you all the news, so I won't write any more. Love to all and write soon.

Your affect Bro
John

Camp 3rd Reg Ala Volunteers
Poe's Farm near Richmond Aug 9th 1862

Dear Brother

Your letter was received day before yesterday - and hurriedly read - for we were drawn up in line of battle - and every minute expecting to pitch into the Yankees. I received mother's at the same time - and only had time to glance over their contents - and destroy them - Such a tramp as we have been on for the past 6 days - oh well! I get warm thinking about it. As I have nothing else to write about I will tell you concerning the trip. Last Monday morning we were ordered to get ready for picket duty. Now we all knew the kind of picketing it was - Merely going down the road some four miles - and encamping in the woods near a large house - where was splendid water - huckleberries (that is not rightly spelled according to dictionary but the other way never did spell it) innumerable - and nothing to do but to prevent people passing the lines without proper permits. So we went prepared to have a glorious time. Carrying stew pans and sugar to steer the berries. Visions of huckleberry pies and pudding dumplings loomed up in the perspective. We arrived there very much to the sorrow of two Georgia Regiments which had been stationed there a week and who were enjoying themselves hugely. We had two Regiments from our brigade. So all day we were in the woods getting berries - stewing them - making pies &c in fact beginning to have as fine a time as could be desired. But next morning - Tuesday - about day break - here came the Cavalry pickets - tearing down the road as if old Harry was behind them - and very much to our disgust and sorrow - announced that the Yankees were advancing in force upon Malvern

While I knew the jig was up then - and that my
anticipated pic (mis) it - was knocked into a cocked
hat. The string of carriers - who kept coming at a
break neck pace past us for the next two hours going
in the direction of head quarters did not tend to quiet
our apprehensions. About breakfast time - they got
up all sorts of a rumpus down the road - Cannons -
~~any number of them -~~ ~~Artillery~~ Considerable -
Shortly came an order from Genl Rodes to pack up
our duds - as the Brigade would soon join us - which
it shortly did - and we took up the line of march
for Malvern Hill distant eight miles - You remember
it was at that place - that the last great battle was
fought - and there our brigade met us and came
out squared - After moving some two miles in that
direction word was brought that the enemy were
advancing - We accordingly took a very strong position
at White Oak Swamp crossing - The place where Magruder
began his fight - Batteries were planted on the hill
which commanded the road beyond the Swamp for
a mile - Soon more troops came pouring in - and
no end to the artillery - And then came the
Ambulance train - that's a most infernal interesting
spectacle - and with them the surgeons - looking
very professional - in their shub sleeves and green
sashes - Confound them - they ought to be kept out
of sight - for upon seeing them on such an occasion
visions of saw - hatchets - probes - knives - tourniquets -
and ^{every} imaginable species of instruments of torture -
instantly arise - while an interesting mental panorama
of shattered limbs - amputated legs - and heads
with more holes than they are justly entitled to -
pass rapidly along - We were immediately
put to work fortifying and remained there
that night - sleeping on the ground - next

morning

"I awoke under the impression that I was swimming in the middle of the Atlantic. but soon discovered it was only the dew. About noon Genl Ripley commanding the Division came tearing down the road in his shirt sleeves - and riding up to Gen Rods. Hd Quarters dismounted - followed by any quantity of Brigadiers. Soon amidst a dust like a Newfoundland fog came ^{the} artillery - Company after Company went past in a row - followed by another Division of infantry.

The Generals held a half hours Confab - and away went a dozen Couriers - in as many different directions - "Fall in Third" we were to be the advance - So off we started - That night we bivouaced within two miles of the Yankees. There I learned the programme. Longstreet was marching upon Mead's hill - with his division in one Direction. McCall's in another - and Ripley - with his (formerly D. S. Hills) in a third. There was every prospect of being quite a success in that part of the Campaign Country next morning.

Next day we were aroused early and started. we heard that the Yankees had fallen back to the Hill. we marched to within half a mile - and formed line of battle at a church - and sent the 6th Ala as skirmishers through the woods to find out what the Yanks wanted in that country. We were to open the Ball. Whilst waiting there. Yours and Abothers letters were handed me. But the Yanks had scented the snare, and were leaving. we were so close behind them that the 6th Ala - caught one in the woods. Thirty six prisoners in all were taken. We were ordered to advance and soon reached the Hill. When clouds of dust could be seen far back towards the

point where the Yankees were in full retreat -
They numbered their divisions - So well timed
were our movements that Longstreet 16th Lane
and Ripleys divisions reached the heels within
five minutes of each other - We remained there
all day - and leaving two regiments - returned
some five miles that night - Next morning
Yesterday - we started for camp - I shall never
forget that march - twelve long miles through
the burning sun - and the hottest day of this
year - I really thought that my brain would
bake - We marched the twelve miles by 11 o'clock -
and to my intense joy reached Camp which
seemed a perfect paradise - The tents appeared
palaces - after sleeping for five nights exposed to
the dew with no covering but a blanket - I am
brought to the color of an Arab by the sun - We had
no field Officers along with us - I was second
Officer in Rank and acted as Lieut Colonel -
So many of our Officers are sick that I have been
drilling the Regiment part of the time - The day
before we started upon our tramp I sent Jimmy
to town - he was sick - and did not get any
better out in Camp - I wish that I could get
him a furlough - but I see of no chance -

Let me hear from you again - The newspapers
this morning announced that the Ram Arkansas
has been blown up - Love to all.

Yours Affect Bro
John

Camp 3rd Reg Ala Volunteers
Poe's Farm near Richmond Aug 9th 1862

Dear Brother [Edmund]

Your letter was received day before yesterday, and hurriedly read, for we were drawn up in line of battle, and every minute expecting to pitch into the Yankees. I received Mothers at the same time and only had time to glance over their contents and destroy them. Such a tramp as we have been on for the past 6 days, *whew!!* I get warm thinking about it. As I have nothing else to write I will tell you concerning the trip. Last Monday morning [Aug 4] we were ordered to get ready for picket duty. Now we all knew the kind of picketing it was. Merely going down the road some four miles, and encamping in the woods near a large house, where was splendid water, huckleberries (that is not rightly spelled according to dictionary but the other way never did spell it) innumerable, and nothing to do but to prevent people passing the lines without proper permits. So we went prepared to have a glorious time, carrying stew pans and sugar to stew the berries. Visions of huckleberry pies and dumplings loomed up in the perspective. We arrived there very much to the sorrow of two Georgia Regiments which had been stationed there a week and who were enjoying themselves hugely. We had two regiments from our brigade. So all day we were in the woods getting berries – stewing them – making pies etc. in fact beginning to have as fine a time as could be desired. But next morning – Tuesday – about day break – here came the Cavalry pickets, tearing down the road as if old Harry was behind them, and very much to our disgust and sorrow, ~~commenced that~~ *announced that the*

Yankees were advancing in bottom line obscured force upon Malvern
[page 2] Hill. I knew the jig was up then and that my anticipated pie (?) it was knocked into a cocked hat. The string of couriers who kept coming at a break neck pace past us for the next two hours going in the direction of head quarters did not tend to quiet our apprehensions.

About breakfast time, they got up all sorts of a rumpus down the road – Cannons – any number of them – Musketry, considerable – shortly came an order from Gen'l Rodes to pack up our duds as the Brigade would soon join us, which it shortly did, and we took up the line of march for Malvern Hill distant eight miles. You remember it was at that place, that the last great battle was fought, and there our brigade went in and came out squeezed [?] After moving some two miles in that direction word was brought that the enemy were advancing. We accordingly took a very strong position at White Oak swamp crossing. The place where Magruder began his fight. Batteries were planted on the hill which commanded the road beyond the swamp for a mile. Soon more troops came pouring in, and no end to the artillery. And then came the Ambulance train. That's a most infernal interesting spectacle, and with them the surgeons, looking very professional, in their shirt sleeves and green sashes. Confound them – they ought to be kept out of sight, for upon seeing them on such an occasion visions of saws, hatchets, probes, knives, tourniquets, and every imaginable species of instruments of torture, instantly arise, while an interesting mental panorama of shattered limbs,

amputated legs, and heads with more holes than they are justly entitled to, pass rapidly along. We were immediately put to work fortifying and remained there till [page 3] morning. I awoke under the impression that I was swimming in the middle of the Atlantic, but soon discovered it was only the dew.

About noon, Gen'l Ripley, commanding the Division, came tearing down the road in his shirt sleeves and riding up to Gen Rodes [Head] Quarters, dismounted, followed by any quantity of Brigadiers. Soon, amidst a dust like a Newfoundland fog came the artillery – company after company went past in a run – followed by another Division of Infantry.

The General held a half hours confab and away went a dozen couriers in as many different directions. "Fall in Third" – we were to be the advance – so off we started. That night we bivouaced [sic] within two miles of the Yankees. There I learned the programme. Longstreet was marching upon Malvern Hill, with his division in one Direction, McClaws in another, and Ripley, with his (formerly D.H. Hills) in a third. There was every prospect of being quite a muss in that part of the ~~Company~~ Country next morning.

Next day [Thursday, Aug 7] we were aroused early and started. We heard that the Yankees had fallen back to the Hill – we marched to within half a mile and formed line of battle at a church and sent the 6th Ala as skirmishers through the woods to find out what the Yanks wanted in that country. We were to open the Ball. Whilst waiting there, yours and Mothers letters were handed me. But the Yanks had scented the — and were learning we were so close behind them that the 6th Ala, caught one in the woods. Thirty six prisoners in all were taken. We were ordered to advance and soon reached the Hill. When clouds [page 4] rised [?] where the Yankees were in full retreat. They numbered their divisions. So well timed were our movements that Longstreet, McLaws and Ripleys divisions reached the Hill within five minutes of each other. We remained there all day, and leaving two regiments, returned some five miles that night. Next morning, Yesterday, we started for Camp. I shall never forget that march – twelve long miles through the burning sun – and the hottest day of this year. I really thought that my brains would bake. We marched the twelve miles by 11 o'clock and to my intense joy reached Camp, which seemed a perfect paradise. The tents appeared palaces, after sleeping for five nights exposed to the dew with no covering but a blanket. I am burned to the color of an Arab by the sun. We had no field officers along with us. I was second officer in Rank and acted as Lieut Colonel. So many of our officers are sick that I have been drilling the Regiment part of the time. The day before we started upon our tramp, I sent Jimmy to town – he was sick – and did not get any letter out in Camp. I wish[?] that I could get him a furlough, but I see no chance.

Let me hear from you again. The newspapers this morning announce that the Ram Arkansas has been blown up. Love to all.

Your Affect Bro

John

maybe
"rent"

Bunkers Hill Va
Sept 29th 1862

Dear Sis

I wrote home about ten days ago and sent the letter by Mr. Butler - at whose house I was then staying. I hope that the letter ~~will~~ has reached you ~~in~~ this - for I know how anxious you all will be to hear of me since the recent battles. I rejoined my regiment two days after and we are now stationed at Bunkers Hill, about twelve miles north of Winchester. Hill's Division is now attached to Old Stonewall's Corps - and we are now in the army of the Valley. You have doubtless heard by this time authentic accounts of the battles in Maryland. The battle fought in the South mountains on Sunday the 14th - was fought by D.H. Hill's division. The fight commenced about sun rise. Rod's brigade was eight miles from the mountains - we were drawn up in line of battle at the cross roads to intercept the Cavalry which had escaped from Harper's Ferry and reported to be coming up in our rear. About 10 O'clock A.M. a courier from Gen. Hill - ordered our Brigade up to his support.

We immediately started at the quickest possible time part of the whole doubled quicking and reached the mountain pass in 1 1/2 hours time.

We went up to the support of a battery to the left of the pass - and there remained until two O'clock under a heavy fire of artillery. The shells flew thick around among and over us. Imagine our little division of 800 men fighting successfully 16,000 Clifton's and army for one whole day. About 2 O'clock the enemy began a simultaneous advance along their lines. Our numbers were so small - that our brigade was continually changing position.

double quicking down one mountain - and up the other
and back again - to mislead the enemy I suppose
as to our numbers - We were finally placed in
the position which we were to occupy - And I
cannot confess that the times looked decidedly scary
for the brigade was divided and each regiment placed
in position by itself - in some places four hundred yards
apart - I was then sent down the mountain with my
Company deployed as skirmishers - To the left of the
Regiment was a dark ravine in which were the
small stone houses - I stationed my Company in
the orchard and then went up into the front porch
of the house and sat upon the top step to watch the
motions of the enemy - I had not been there over a third
a minute before I saw a Yankee battery bringing
their pieces into position at a run - they were about
a mile distant - Presently came a puff of white
smoke - And here came a shell screaming
through the air and smack it went through
the roof - I was not long in coming down those
steps - Another and another came - each one
better directed - and in a few minutes - that
house had enough air holes in it - to keep it
well ventilated this winter - We then marched
by the ~~same~~ right flank - through the orchard
over the fence - and up the slope of the
mountain - when I got the boys secured
behind rocks - and then we waited for something
else to turn up - Presently the enemys skirmishers
detached themselves from the main body - and
deployed most beautifully - On they came up
the slopes of the mountain - It was a beautiful
sight - then - From our position way up the side
of the mountain one could see the Country for
fifty miles - To the east lay the blue ridge

At our feet lay the immense army of the Yankees stretching over the plain. and looking like pygmies. But I had not much time to enjoy the view for a scattering fire on our left told that the skirmishers were at work. Then a missile ball whistling over head - advised me to get behind my rock. Soon I saw a blue coat jumping from one rock to another. And then the crackling of rifles told that the Boys were at work. They made a desperate effort to get possession of the orchard and houses. But our good rifles kept them off. I could hear their officers distinctly urging them on - abusing and swearing at them. Another Company from the regiment was sent down to our relief. Their skirmishers soon made three desperate efforts to get the houses. and we sent them back each time in confusion. for every crack of the rifle. I could see a blue coat fall.

Their third line of skirmishers then advanced and made a more determined effort. But we held them there. until their main line advanced to their support. I then heard a tramping behind and turning saw the Regiment within their feet of me. and before I could recall my company it had passed beyond and poured a volley into the ranks of the enemy. They immediately then became disorganized and fell in confusion on the rocks and in the ravine. They still seemed determined to get those houses. and until dark. was kept our position and drove back two columns. But their third coming up proved too much. and getting the houses. completely flanked us. we were then ordered to fall back. this was the most dangerous part of the work. for as it was up hill. we were in range all the time. I then became

separated from my regiment - and fell in with
another brigade - we made another stand on the
top of the mountain - But the enemy did not
press us further - When you take into consideration
the fact that we only numbered 800 - and
the enemy were more than ten times that number
you certainly cannot call it a defeat - as we held
our position all day. The Leland was hurrying
to the relief of Keapers Ferry and we were left
until Jackson could capture the Ferry we did it
My first Lieut Lake was killed instantly he was
a noble fellow - Jeff Childress is among the missing
one of my Comd'g are missing - On Wednesday
the most terrible battle of the war occurred - when
night put an end to the conflict - we had driven
the enemy back upon our right and left and
had held our own in the Centre - Henry Donaldson
was knocked down with a fragment of a shell - he
is now with us and quite well - Tom Liscum
was shot through the face - I received a severe
blow from something on the hill in Sunday's fight
did not feel it at the time - but the next day
my leg was very stiff and painful - I am well
now - Killed women and missing of the
regiment in this fight amount to 1000.

The Regiment numbered nearly 2000 -
You can direct letters as heretofore to Richmond
they will be sent from there to the army -
My love to all and Admiration from
you soon -

Your affect Brother
Doan

My old acquaintance of Mr. Lamon Arnold, Major Gen. Reno
was killed and from what a prisoner told me - was killed

[In Pencil]

Bunker Hill, Virginia
Sept 29th 1862

Dear Sis

I wrote home about two days ago and sent the letter by Mr Boteler, at whose house I was then staying. I hope that the letter with has reached you ere this, for I know how anxious you all will be to hear of me since the recent battles. I rejoined my regiment two days after and we are now stationed at Bunkers Hill, about twelve miles north of Winchester. Hills Division is now attached to Old Stonewall's Corps, and we are now in the Army of the Valley. You have doubtless heard by this time authentic accounts of the battles in Maryland. The battle fought in the South Mountains on Sunday the 14th was fought by D.H. Hill's Division. The fight commenced about sun rise. Rode's brigade was eight miles from the mountains – we were drawn up in line of battle at the cross roads to interrupt the Cavalry which had escaped from Harpers Ferry and reported to be coming up in our rear. About 10 o'clock a.m, a courier from Gen Hill, ordered our Brigade up to his support.

We immediately started at the quickest possible time, part of the while doubled quicking, and reached the mountain pass in 1½ hours time.

We went into the support of a battery to the left of the pass, and there remained until two o'clock under a heavy fire of artillery. The shells flew thick around, among, and over us. Imagine our little division of 8000 men fighting successfully McClellan's Grand Army for one whole day. About 2 o'clock the enemy began a simultaneous advance along their lines. Our numbers were so small, that our brigade was continually changing position [page 2] double quacking down one mountain, and up the other and back again, to mislead the enemy I suppose as to our numbers. We were finally placed in the position which we were to occupy. And I must confess that the times looked decidedly scarey [sic] for the brigade was divided and each regiment placed on position by itself, in some places four hundred yards apart. I was then sent down the mountain with my Company deployed as skirmishers. To the left of the regiment was a deep ravine in which were three small stone houses. I stationed my company in the orchard and then went up onto the front porch of the house and sat upon the top step to watch the motions of the enemy. I had not been there more than a minute before I saw a Yankee battery bringing their pieces into position at a run – they were about a mile distant. Presently came a puff of white smoke – and here came a shell screaming through the air and smash it went through the roof. I was not long in running down those steps. Another and another came, each one better directed, and in a few minutes, that house had enough air holes in it to keep it well ventilated this winter. We then marched by the right flank through the orchard, over the fence, and up the slope of the mountain, where I got the boys secreted behind rocks, and then we waited for something else to turn up. Presently the enemys [sic] skirmishers detached themselves from the main body, and deployed most beautifully. On they came up the slopes of the mountain. It was a beautiful

sight then. From our position way up the side of the mountain, one could see the country for fifty miles. To the east lay the blue ridge. [page 3] At our feet lay the immense army of the Yankees stretching over the plain, and looking like pigmies. But I had not much time to enjoy the scene for a scattering fire on our left told that the skirmishers were at work. Then a minie ball whistling over head, advised me to get behind my rock. Soon I saw a blue coat jumping from one rock to another and then the cracking of our rifles told that the Boys were at work. They made a desperate effort to get possession of the orchard and houses, but our good rifles kept them off. I could hear their officers distinctly urging them – on – abusing and swearing at them. Another company from the regiment was sent down to our relief. Their skirmishers sent made three desperate efforts to get the houses, and we sent them back each time in confusion, for every crack of the rifle, I could see a blue coat fall.

Their third line of skirmishers then advanced and made a more determined effort, but we held them there, until their main line advanced to their support. I then heard a tramping behind, and turning, saw the regiment within three feet of me, and before I could recall my company, it had passed beyond and poured a volley into the ranks of the enemy. The musketry then became terrific, the balls pattered on the rocks like rain. They still seemed determined to get those houses, and until dark, we kept our position and drove back two columns. But their third [column] coming up proved too much, and getting the houses, completely flanked us. We were then ordered to fall back – this was the most dangerous part of the work – for as it was up hill, we were in range all the time. I then became [page 4] separated from my regiment, and fell in with another brigade, we made another stand on the top of the mountain, but the enemy did not press us further. When you take into consideration the fact that we only numbered 8000, and the enemy were more than ten times that number, you certainly cannot call it a defeat as we held our position all day. McClelland was hurrying to the relief of Harpers ferry and we were put in that mountain pass to keep him in check until Jackson could capture the Ferry – we did it.

My first Lieut Lake¹⁴ was killed instantly – he was a noble fellow. Jeff Childress is among the missing. Six of my Company are missing. On Wednesday the most terrific battle of the war occurred. When night put an end to the conflict, we had driven the enemy back upon our right and left and had held our own in the Centre¹⁵. Henry Donaldson¹⁶ was knocked down with a fragment of shell – he is now with us and quite well. Tom Lesesne¹⁷ [sic] was shot through the face. I received a severe blow from something on the hip in Sundays fight, did not feel it at the time, but the next day my leg was very stiff and bruised. It is

¹⁴ 1LT John Jemison Lake was receiving complement from Colonel Battle for his conduct of the skirmish line (this, at the time Hoyt is separated from his regiment) when he was killed. Had Captain Hoyt not become separated when he did, *he* may have caught the bullet instead.

¹⁵ By “Centre,” Hoyt is referring to the Sunken Road at Antietam, aka “The Bloody Lane.”

¹⁶ SGT Donaldson was remembered by many by his nickname “Shanghai;” He and LT Lake, both received mention for gallantry in Gen. D.H. Hill’s Official Report; Shanghai survived the war.

¹⁷ Tom Lecesne survived this wound, but was later mortally wounded at Chancellorsville.

over now. The killed, wounded and missing of the regiment in the two fights amount to 107 [?] The regiment mustered nearly 360 [?] strong.

You can direct letters as heretofore to Richmond, they will be sent from there to the army. My love to all and let me hear from you soon.

Your affect Bro
John

My old acquaintance of Mt Vernon Arsenal, Major [Jesse] Reno was killed and from what a prisoner told me, was killed by our regiment.¹⁸

¹⁸ Major Gen. Jesse Reno was in command of the Union IX Corps at South Mountain. See letter No. 2



Miss Clara M. Hoyt
Washington
Beaufort Co
N. C. Carolina

6th 6th / 61
From Sergt Anote Hoyt

Mobile Rifle Company.

COMPANY

3rd Regiment Alabama

ENTRENCHED CAMP, NEAR

Miss Clara B. Hoyt
Washington
N. Carolina



Miss Clara B. Hoyt
Washington
N. Carolina

